

CHRISTIAN NEWS EDITOR SUED BY PROFESSOR FOR SPEAKING AGAINST PSYCHOBABBLE

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In December 1995, Christian News Editor Herman Otten was sued by Dr. Joseph Barbour, professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and columnist for the Lutheran Witness. Both entities are associated with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Otten is a Lutheran pastor and edits the biweekly Christian News (3277 Boeuf Lutheran Rd., New Haven, MO 63068-9568).

In 1995 Otten published a number of articles critical of Barbour's teaching and counseling. Now Barbour is accusing Otten of "maliciously preparing and composing false, scandalous and defamatory libel about him and his work." The suit claims that "as a direct and proximate result of the defamatory publication plaintiff has been damaged in an amount in excess of \$15,000."

Barbour has endorsed the dangerous book entitled The Courage to Heal, written by two lesbians. It is called the "Bible of the Recovery Movement."

When Otten learned of the proposed lawsuit and before it was formally filed, he attempted to discuss the matter with Barbour over the phone, but Barbour refused to talk and hung up the phone.

A press release on this case stated the following facts:

"Christian News may, in fact, be silenced due to possible financial bankruptcy brought about by the ridiculous lawsuit entered by Dr. Joseph Barbour and his exorbitant monetary demands from Lutheran News (parent organization of Christian News) and from Pastor Otten, himself. Barbour is a member of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and also conducts a part-time psychological counseling service. The law suit arose from Otten's reporting of a situation, in which a member of Synod was accused by his daughter with the support of Barbour of incestuous relations with her, and reportedly offering the dead bodies of their allegedly aborted children as sacrifices to the devil. The member of Synod has since been cleared of these bizarre accusations. However, he still has been unable to reclaim one of his most precious possessions, the love and affection of his estranged daughter. It is of interest to note that Otten's attorneys have reportedly uncovered additional evidence of ruined lives connected with Barbour's counseling, which may possibly lead to ramifications involving Barbour, the seminary and the Synod."

Of his defense strategy, Otten said: "I will just plead that I told the truth and provide the evidence. Christian News has used this defense tactic ever since it began in 1962."

A Lutheran News Legal Defense Fund has been established to help raise the money for Pastor Otten's defense. Senator William Dannemeyer of California is co-chairman of this Fund. The announcement says, "The universal defense against libel is truth, and we believe the legal process now under way will surely show that Otten has told the truth. Otten has engaged the services of skilled legal counsel, who must be paid. Otten's attorneys have already engaged expert witnesses and they are now in the process of preparing for depositions. All of these things important to Otten's defense come at a cost, a cost which Otten's slender financial resources cannot bear." The outcome of his trial has repercussions for other Christian publications. If you are interested in contributing to this cause, contact the Lutheran News Legal Defense Fund, 87 Pine Brook Rd., Towaco, NJ 07082. (201) 263-1332 (voice), 316-8839 (fax).